

South Lyon High School Boys' Cross Country

"Striding for Excellence"

To: Cath Petroskey
Re: April 30 Committee Hearing

April 29, 2009

House Committee on Great Lakes and Environment
Attn: Cath Petroskey, Committee Clerk
124 N. Capitol P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Ms. Petroskey:

I understand that the House Committee on Great Lakes and Environment is meeting on April 30 to discuss funding for our Michigan State Parks. I want to share my experiences with Island Lake State Park near Brighton, Michigan.

I have been the cross country running coach at South Lyon High School for 19 years. For all of those years, Island Lake State Park has been the home of our team. Twenty years of high school boys and girls from South Lyon have come to love Island Lake, and the park has been very good to us.

Our team practices and competes at Island Lake for three months each year, from August through October. We have worked with the park's longtime supervisor, JoAnne Stritmatter, to lay out a very nice course on the shores of Kent Lake for our team to race on. Our course is widely recognized as an athlete's favorite around the league—challenging yet beautiful with its rolling landscape and wonderful lake.

Our team uses the entirety of Island Lake's land during the season. We sleep at the rustic cabins for our annual training camp—a tradition dating 17 years. We run the blue and yellow hike/bike trails for variety and challenge. We canoe the Huron River. We swim in Trout Lake, Kent Lake, and Spring Mill Pond. We run and bike the roads and trails, and play games like Triangles, Kick Ball, Speed Ball, Ultimate Frisbee, and Spiders and Flies everywhere in the park. Our camp speakers and yoga instructor use the pavilions for shelter and shade during presentations.

We host the annual South Lyon Invitational at Island Lake. Schools from all over southeast and mid Michigan come to compete at this event. Afterwards, we enjoy a family picnic using the Kent Lake beachfront.

We have built strong relationships with the staff of Island Lake. Ms. Stritmatter has been quite gracious in meeting our needs. Her staff has been friendly and helpful, and has even been known to come to our meets when off duty to cheer on our athletes. Over the years we have been lucky to work with retired rangers Greg Scott and Mike Donley and current rangers like Andy Haapala, Ed Wickens, Kim Heckmann, Dave Zmiky, and Bob Roth who work to create a fun and safe environment for our athletes to use.

Each summer, I meet with our parents and athletes to discuss the upcoming season. I make a point to talk to the athletes and their parents about the important role that Island Lake plays in our team's success. The athletes come to develop a strong respect for the park, its employees, and the natural environment that the park embodies.

We have seen many improvements to the park in the last 19 years. The newer paved and dirt bike paths are used extensively by many types of athletes. The bathroom buildings are modern and clean, and Trout Lake has become a local favorite for swimming.

Island Lake State Recreation Area has been good to hundreds of boys and girls from South Lyon High School and from schools all over our area. I sincerely hope that the House Committee on Great Lakes and Environment can continue to provide adequate funding for our park and for similar parks throughout our great state of Michigan.

Sincerely,

Scott Smith
Cross Country Coach
South Lyon High School